Plate Nº 24.

"GAME OF THE ARROW," or ARCHERY OF THE MANDANS.

This game, though not one of any great excitement or action, was one of curious interest, attended with rules and regulations which were pleasing, rendering the scene very agreeable in effect. The Mandans, whom I found a polite and friendly tribe of Indians, on the head waters of the Missouri, seemed to vie more spiritedly and more constantly in their athletic games, (and from their almost constant practice, seem to have advanced farther into the science of them,) than any of the other tribes; and for their advancement, had formed into something like amateur clubs, which gave a value to their amusements, and lent an additional stimulus to their efforts, as well as a gentlemanly and studied grace to all of their groups, peculiarly pleasing to the eye of an artist or an amateur.

A voluminous book might be devoted to the games and various amusements of this peculiar tribe, the principal of which are the games of Tchung-kee, game of the Mocasin, game of the Platter, Ball-plays, game of the Arrow, Horse-racing, Foot-racing, &c. in all of which, from constant practice, they become exceedingly skilled. Gambling is looked upon by all of these wild people as a rational and innocent amusement, there being no laws of their country denominating it a vice; and in these numerous games of skill and of chance, their few personal goods are most of the time liberally and boldly staked.

The principal weapon of war and also for the chase, by which they supply their families with food, is the bow; and the strife illustrated in this plate, is one which, while it is affording them an exciting and pleasing emulation, is educating them in the effectual use of that weapon to which they are chiefly indebted for their protection and subsistence.

The meeting represented here is something like that of an Archery Club in the civilized world, but for a different mode of shooting. Having but little necessity for correct shooting at a long distance, as I have mentioned in an early part of this work, their hunting and warring being chiefly done from the backs of their running horses, the great merit in archery with them consists in the rapidity and force with which they can discharge their arrows from their bows: and the strife in this game (in which I have given striking portraits from the life, of several of the leading young men of the tribe) was to decide who could discharge from his bow the greatest number of arrows before his first one should fall to the ground; each arrow to pass over a certain line sufficiently distant to characterize it as a clean and efficient shot. For this purpose a bow, a shield, a quiver or other valuable, is staked as an entrance fee, and each one, grasping in his hand with the bow, a handful of arrows drawn from his quiver, as he does when rushing into battle, gives a judicious elevation to his first, and follows it with others in the most rapid succession that he can: a red flag is raised at the end of the ground at the instant the first arrow falls, and he who can count the greatest number of arrows in the air at one time, is victor, and claims the highest prize. I never beheld a more classic and beautiful group, nor a more graceful and gentlemanly rivalry than in the instance when I made the subjoined sketch; and on this occasion the young man represented in the attitude of shooting, succeeded in getting eight of his arrows on the wing at once, which I distinctly counted. Nor did it appear to be owing to any extraordinary distance to which the first was thrown, but to the exact elevation given to it, and the incredible quickness of fixing the rest of them upon the string and getting them off.

Plate Nº 25.

WI-JUN-JON. THE PIGEON'S EGG HEAD.

In offering this illustration to the reader, I am presenting to him a faithful delineation of the resemblance of an Assinneboin Warrior, in the flowing and classic costume of his country, as he appeared on his way to the city of Washington, faithfully contrasted with the uncouth plight in which he returned to his tribe the next season, after one year's teaching in the school of civilization: and in the following narrative, a faithful account of its melancholy and fatal results.

Wi-jun-jon, the Pigeon's Egg Head, was a warrior of the Assinneboins, young, proud, handsome, valiant, and graceful. He had fought many a battle and won many laurels. The numerous scalps from his enemies' heads adorned his dress, and his claims were fair and just for the highest honours that his country could bestow upon him, for his father was head chief of the nation. This young Assinneboin, the Pigeon's Egg Head, was selected by Major Sanford, the Indian agent, to represent his tribe in a delegation which visited Washington city under his charge, in the winter of 1832. With this gentleman the Assinneboin, together with representatives of several others of those North-western tribes, descended the Missouri river several thousand miles on their way to Washington. While descending the river in a Mackinaw boat, from the mouth of the Yellow Stone, Wi-jun-jon and another of his tribe who was with him, at their first approach to the civilized settlements, commenced a register of the white men's houses (or cabins) which they passed, by cutting a notch for each on the side of a pipe-stem, in order to be able to show, when they should get home, how many white men's houses they had seen on their journey. At first the cabins were scarce; but continually more and more rapidly increased in numbers as they advanced further down the river, by which means their pipe-stem was soon filled with notches, when they resolved to cut the rest of them on the handle of a war-club, which, to their great surprise,